

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 04598 01 OF 03 101624Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----028873 101634Z /45

O R 101504Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9154
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 DAMASCUS 4598

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

AMMAN FOR ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: SGDS-1
TAGS: PBOR, MOPS, MILI, SY, LE, IS

REF: STATE 200854

1. SUMMARY: IN FIRST MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR, FONMIN KHADDAM
SAID SYRIA WOULD STUDY U.S. PROPOSAL FOR ARAB MEETING ON
LEBANON BUT WOULD NOT WANT TO ACT IN ANY WAY TO UNDERMINE
PRESIDENT SARKIS. HE DEFENDED ADF ROLE IN SUPPORT OF
LEGITIMATE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, ASSERTED ADF SHOWING GREAT
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RESTRAINT IN FACE OF DELIBERATE PROVOCATIONS AND TOOK
U.S. TO TASK FOR NOT PUBLICLY CONDEMNING MILITIA ACTIONS.
HE URGED THAT U.S. AND SYRIA REMAIN IN CLOSE TOUCH ON
LEBANESE SITUATION AND WORK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT
SARKIS. END SUMMARY.

2. KHADDAM(S PRIVATE SECRETARY TELEPHONE EVENING

AUGUST 9 TO TRANSMIT FOREIGN MINISTER'S AGREEMENT TO COMBINING INITIAL PROTOCOL CALL WITH SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION ON LEBANON AND HIS PREFERENCE THAT WE MEET RIGHT AWAY RATHER THAN AUGUST 10 OR LATER. SO STATED, I DECIDED IT PREFERABLE TO MEET WITH KHADDAM IMMEDIATELY EVEN THOUGH WE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED REPORT OF AMB. PARKER'S SOUNDING. PELLETREAU ACCOMPANIED ME. MEETING LASTED 1 1/2 HOURS.

3. AFTER CORDIAL RECEPTION AND HANDING OVER COPIES OF LETTERS, THANKED KHADDAM FOR AGREEING TO SEE ME SO QUICKLY. SAID USG WAS INCREASINGLY WORRIED ABOUT SERIOUS DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON. WE UNDERSTOOD FULLY POSITION OF SARG. SYRIA HAD BEEN CONTINUALLY PROVOKED AND HARRASSED BY MARONITE MILITIAS. SYRIA WAS ENDEAVORING TO PRESERVE LEBANESE SECURITY, ACTING ON BEHALF OF GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT SARKIS. SYRIA'S AIM WAS TO ENSURE COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE, ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND ITS UNITY. IT SOUGHT TO FORESTALL PARTITION AND DID NOT FUNDAMENTALLY DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN RELIGIOUS FACTIONS. INDEED, TWO AND A HALF YEARS AGO SYRIA HAD SAVED MARONITES FROM IMMINENT DEFEAT IN PURSUIT OF THAT OBJECTIVE. WE KNEW SYRIA WOULD LIKE TO SEE LEBANESE ARMY RECONSTITUTED AND DEPLOYED TO PERMIT WITHDRAWAL OF ADF.

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4. TOLD KHADDAM USG SHARES ALL THESE OBJECTIVES. U.S. BELIEVES IT IMPORTANT THAT CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN LEBANON REMAIN AN INTEGRAL PART OF ARAB WORLD, NOT AN ISOLATED MINI-STATE. CONTRARY TO WHAT MANY BELIEVED. U.S. WAS NOT SUPPORTING MARONITE MILITIAS NOR WAS IT ENCOURAGING ISRAELI SUPPORT OF THESE MILITIA. ON CONTRARY, U.S. HAS DONE ITS BEST TO RESTRAIN BOTH THESE PARTIES AS IT HAS URGED SYRIA ALSO TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT, ALL WITHOUT EFFECT UP TO NOW. INSTEAD THERE IS A WORSENING CYCLE OF VIOLENCE WITH NO APPARENT END IN SIGHT. U.S. HAS MADE MAJOR AND SUSTAINED EFFORT WITH ISRAELIS, MOST RECENTLY DURING SECRETARY'S VISIT, TO DISCOURAGE ANY ISRAELI ACTION WHICH WOULD EXACERBATE SITUATION. U.S. HAS URGED ISRAEL TO STOP SENDING MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO ITS LEBANESE CONTACTS OF A KIND AND IN A WAY WHICH ENCOURAGES MARONITE FORCES TO PROLONG FIGHTING OR CONTINUE PROVOKING ADF.

5. SAID I WISHED TO STATE VERY FRANKLY THAT WHILE U.S. WOULD BE UNDERTAKING RENEWED MAJOR EFFORTS WITH QUARTERS HAVING INFLUENCE ON MILITIA LEADERS, HEAVY RETALIATORY SHELLING BY SYRIAN ARMY, DISPROPORTIONATE TO PROVOCATION.

TIONS, WAS CAUSING US GEAT AND PARTICULAR CONCERN. SYRIAN ACTIONS WERE LOSING SYRIA FRIENDS AND INSTEAD OF RESTORING COHESION WERE LEADING TO GREATER POLARIZATION AND RISKED MOBILIZING WHOLE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AGAINST SYRIA PRESENCE. MOREOVER, RISING VIOLENCE COULD LEAD TO WIDER HOSTILITIES IN AREA WHICH WOULD BE IN NO ONE'S INTEREST. WE CONTINUE TO HEAR REPORTS OF SERIOUS OUTBREAKS IN FIGHTING EXPECTED IN NEXT FEW DAYS.

6. ON URGENT INSTRUCTIONS, THEREFORE, SAID I WISHED TO PROPOSE COURSE OF ACTION WHICH MIGHT PUT AN END TO THE VIOLENCE AND DEFUSE SITUATION. OUR PREMISE IS THAT THIS IS FIRST AND FOREMOST AN ARAB PROBLEM, PARTICULARLY FOR LEBANON AND ARAB STATES CONTRIBUTING TO ADF--FORE-
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MOST AMONG THEM SYRIA BUT ALSO INCLUDING SAUDI ARABIA, SUDAN AND UAE, TOGETHER WITH KUWAIT AS MEMBER OF QUADRAPARTITE COMMITTEE. U.S. PROPOSED THAT THESE ARAB GOVERNMENTS MEET TO EXAMINE URGENTLY MEANS FOR DEFUSING CURRENT DANGEROUS SITUATION. WORKING TOGETHER AND FOLLOWING SYRIA'S LEAD, THEY COULD PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FOR LEBANESE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. SUCH A MEETING MIGHT ALSO INVESTIGATE WAYS TO BRING ABOUT NEW AND EFFECTIVE CEASEFIRE AND INSTALLATION, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, OF LEBANESE POLICE AND ARMY UNITS TO PRESERVE SECURITY AT FLASHPOINTS AND ALONG CONFRONTATION LINES. U.S. WAS MAKING PROPOSAL IN CONTEXT OF ITS VALUED DIALOGUE WITH SYRIA AND IN HOPE THAT NEW ELEMENT COULD BE INTRODUCED TO BRING END TO SPIRAL OF CIOLENCE. VIEWS OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WERE, OF COURSE, ALSO BEING ASKED.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 3 DAMASCUS 4598

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y MRN (4598 VICE 4597)

AMMAN FOR ATHERTON

7. KHADDAM OPENED HIS REPLY WITH FLAT STATEMENT THAT
U.S. POSITION ON LEBANON WAS NOT BALANCED. WHILE ISRAEL
AND THE MILITIAS WERE PREVENTING LAF FROM ENTERING SOUTH,
U.S. REMAINED SILENT. SYRIA BELIEVED THAT HAD U.S.
TAKEN A CLEAR STAND, ISRAEL WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE
TO BLOCK LEBANESE GOVERNMENT'S ATTEMPT TO RESTORE PART
OF SOUTH TO LEBANESE NATIONAL AUTHORITY. HEART OF
PROBLEM WAS NOT BEIRUT, BUT IN SOUTH AND U.S. POSITION
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ON THIS ISSRE REMAINED AMBIGUOUS.

8. IN BEIRUT, KHADDAM CHARGED, U.S. APPARENTLY EITHER
SAW ONLY SMALL PART OF PICTURE OR WAS RELYING ON FALSE
INFORMATION. CHRISTIAN LEBANON WAS NOT GEMAYEL OR
CHAMOUN. NINETY PERCENT OF LEBANESE OPPOSED THESE
COLLABORATORS WITH ISRAEL. THEY WERE DEFYING THE
LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY OF THE LEBANESE STATE. THEY HAD
PREVENTED REBUILDING LEBANESE ARMY AND RESTORATION OF
LEBANESE INSTITUTIONS. BY NOT TAKING A CLEAR, PUBLIC
POSITION AGAINST THEM U.S. WAS ONLY ENCOURAGING THEIR
PARTITIONIST ACTIONS.
WAS LEBANON EXPECTED TO SUBMIT TO DOMINATION
OF THE DATAEB?

9. ADF, KHADDAM SAID, WAS A LEGITIMATE FORCE, ACTING
ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE LEGITIMACY OF THE

STATE. IT WAS NOT A SYRIAN FORCE AND SYRIA WAS NOT A PARTY TO THE CONFRONTATION. PROBLEM WAS BETWEEN LEBANESE STATE AND ARMED GROUPS WHICH WERE UNDERMINING ITS AUTHORITY. IF SYRIA HAD WANTED TO ACT MILITARILY IT COULD HAVE SOLVED THE PROBLEM WITHIN HOURS. SYRIA WOULD NOT ACT MILITARILY, HOWEVER, BECAUSE DECISION WAS FOR LEBANESE AUTHORITY TO TAKE. HERE KHADDAM ASKED WHETHER U.S. IN ITS REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT NEW OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING IN AUGUST 8-10 PERIOD OF IN NEXT FEW DAYS, THOUGHT SYRIA WAS PLANNING AN INDEPENDENT ACTION. IF SO, OUR INFORMATION WAS INCORRECT. WE HAD ONLY TO ASK PRES. SARKIS WHO WAS ESCALATING FIGHTING. ADF, KHADDAM COULD ASSURE US, WAS NOT TRYING TO EXPLOIT SITUATION. SYRIAN FORCES WERE OPERATING UNDER AUTHORITY OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF PLANS DECIDED ON BY LEBANESE SECRET

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GOVERNMENT.

10. KHADDAM SAID HE WISHED TO ASSURE USG ONCE AGAIN THAT SYRIAN FORCES IN ADF WERE SHOWING MAXIMUM RESTRAINT. THEY WERE BEING FIRED ON DAILY AND IN PAST TWO DAYS JUST AT THE TIME FOR THE IFTAR, BREAKING THE RAMADAN FAST. BUT THEY WERE RESPONDING ONLY AGAINST THE SOURCES OF FIRE. REPORTS U.S. HAD RECEIVED ABOUT INDISCRIMINATE SHELLING AND HUNDREDS OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES WERE GREATLY EXAGGERATED.

11. KHADDAM SAID SYRIA WELCOMED REGULAR CONSULTATION WITH U.S. ON LEBANON. IT WANTED U.S. TO UNDERSTAND ALL SIDES OF SITUATION AND TO STUDY IT TO DETERMINE WHAT OUTCOME IT WANTED IN LEBANON. IF U.S. DECIDED IT WAS FOR PARTITION, THIS WAS U.S. MATTER. IF U.S. DECIDED TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT SARKIS, HOWEVER, AND HIS EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH AUTHORITY OF LEBANESE STATE, IT MUST HELP HIM. DID KATAEB'S PRESENT ATTITUDE HELP PRES. SARKIS? SYRIA SUGGESTED THAT IF U.S. WISHES TO HELP LEBANON, IT SHOULD MAKE ITS POSITION CLEAR AND PUBLIC. IS SHOULD CONDEMN MILITIA PROVOCATIONS AND TELL THE WORLD THAT IS HOLDS MILITIA LEADERS RESPONSIBLE. THE ABSENCE OF SUCH A U.S. STATEMENT ONLY ENCOURAGED CHAMOUN AND PHALANGE TO CONTINUE THEIR PROVOCATIONS. IF AMBASSADOR PARKER NOT WILLING TO ANNOUNCE THAT HE HAS MADE CLEAR TO MILITIA LEADERS THEY DO NOT ENJOY U.S. SUPPORT, PERHAPS HE SHOULD CUT OFF CONTACT WITH THEM ALL TOGETHER. IS IS GOING MORE HARM THAN GOOD.

12. US POSITION IN SOUTH LEBANON IS LIKEWISE UNCLEAR, KHADDAM CHARGED. SAID SARKIS HAD TOLD HIM BY TELEPHONE

EARLIER IN THE DAY THAT ALL DOORS APPEARED CLOSED IN SOUTH.
ISRAELI CONDITIONS WERE IMPOSSIBLE AND COULD NOT BE
ACCEPTED BY ANY LEBANESE WITH SHRED OF DIGNITY. WHY,
HE ASKED, DON'T WE HAVE A CLEAR U.S. POSITION AGAINST
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ISRAELI OBSTINACY AND MILITIAS? U.S. CAN AND SHOULD
BE PUTTING MORE PRESSURE ON ISRAEL ON THIS MATTER. IT
WAS NOT RESPONSABLE THAT ISAREL SHOULD DECIDE HADDAD'S
FUTURE RATHER THAN HIS OWN LEADERS IN HIS OWN COUNTRY.
SYRIA HAD WWIGHED IN WITH PALESTINIANS TO SECURE THEIR
COOPERATION WITH UNIFIL. ONLY HADDAD AND ISRAEL
WERE OBSTRUCTING UN'S TASK.

13. KHADDAM SAID SYRIA AND U.S. SHOULD BE WORKING
TOGETHER TO SUPPORT PRES. SARKIS. SYRIA HOPED U.S.
WOULD TAKE OPER AND FIRM STAND IN HIS FAVOR. A
SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND IF ALL PARTIES WERE WILLING TO
ANNOUNCE THAT THEY WOULD NOT PLACE OBSTACLES IN PATH
OF REESTABLISHING STATE'S LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY AND
INSTITUTIONS. BUT ISRAELIS WERE MANIPULATING CHAMOUN
AND COMPANY IN ORDER TO PREVENT REESTABLISHMENT OF
LEBANESE AUTHORITY IN SOUTH. ISARELIS WERE "MALICIOUS",
KHADDAM CONCLUDED.

14. IN RESPONSE TO KHADDAM'S INITIAL PRESENTATION, I INTER-
JECTED TO MAKE FOLLOWING POINTS:
A. USG FULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ADF IS A LEGITIMATE
FORCE AND THAT INDEED THE MARONITE MILITIA HAVE PRO-
VOKED THE FIGHTING. BUT WE CONSIDER, AS I HAD SAID
EARLIER, THAT SYRIAN ARMY AHS RESPONEDE DISPROPORTION-
ATELY. WOULD THE FOREIGN MINISTER NOT REPEAT NOT AGREE
WITH THIS? (HE DID NOT, CONTENDING THAT OUR INFORMATION
WAS EXAGGERATED AND THAT SYRIAN FORCES HAD TARGETED
MILITIA HEADQUARTERS, AND THAT MANY CIVILIANS HAD
AVOIDED HARM BY FLEEING.)

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 3 DAMASCUS 4598

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

AMMAN FOR ATHERTON

B. IN EXPRESSING OUR CONCERN RE POSSIBLE NEW OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING,
USG WAS NOT SIGNLING OUT SYRIANS ALONE.

THESE REPORTS DID NOT REPEAT NOT CLEARLY INDICATE WHO
WOULD START THE FIGHTING.

C. KHADDAM CERTAINLY MUST KNOW THAT USG FIRMLY OPPOSES
PARTITION AND FULLY SUPPORTS PRESIDENT SARKIS. SOME
MARONITE LEADERS EVEN CONSIDER USG TO BE THEIR ANTAGONIST.
USG HAS INDEED REPEATEDLY AND PUBLICLY MADE CLEAR ITS
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POSITION ON LEBANON, INCLUDING CONDEMNING THE MILITIA
PROVOCATIONS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ALL VIOLENCE. RE AMBASSADOR
PARKER'S CONTACTS WITH MILITIA LEADERS, HE HAS
STRONGLY AND REPEATEDLY MADE CLEAR THEY DO NOT REPEAT
NOT ENJOY U.S. SUPPORT.

D. RE SOUTHERN LEBANON, WE HAVE BACKED THE MOVE OF
LEBANESE FORCES TO THE SOUTH AND SUPPORT THE PROPOSI-
TION THAT THEY SHOULD TAKE OVER CONTTROL OF SOUTHERN
LEBANON. WE HAV WEIGHED IN WITH THE ISRAELIS IN THIS
CONNECTION. WE RECOGNIZED THAT SYRIANS HAVE PLAYED
POSITIVE ROLE SECURING PALESTINIAN COOPERATION WITH
UNIFIL.

15. TURNING TO PROPOSAL FOR ARAB CONSULTATIONS KHADDAM SAID IT DESERVED STUDY AND SYRIA WOULD STUDY IT. SYRIA DID NOT WISH, HOWEVER, TO DO ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT UNDERMINE AUTHORITY OF PRES. SARKIS. THEREFORE, IT WOULD WAIT FOR SARKIS TO RAISE MATTER FIRST SINCE LEBANON WAS PRIMARY STATE INVOLVED. SYRIA, ITSELF, WAS NOT A PARTY TO LEBANESE CONFLICT AND WAS NOT IN POSITION TO SAY YES OR NO. PROBLEM WAS NOT BETWEEN SYRIAN GOVERNMENT AND KATAEB BUT LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND KATAEB.

16. WHAT PARTY, KHADDAM ASKED, HAD PROPOSED THIS IDEA TO U.S.? WHEN ASSURED IDEA WAS OUR OWN, HE ASKED WHAT WE HOPED MIGHT COME OF IT. I ANSWERED THAT IT COULD BE HELPFUL IN ENDING THE FIGHTING AND POSSIBLY IN MEDIATING BETWEEN FORCES INVOLVED. PAST ARAB MEDIATION EFFORTS, KHADDAM ASSERTED, HAD ALL BEEN INEFFECTIVE. ONLY SYRIAN INTERVENTION HAD BEEN ABLE TO HALT CIVIL WAR. BESIDES, WHAT WAS THERE TO MEDIATE BETWEEN A LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT AND AN OUTLAW OPERATING AGAINST IT? I REPLIED THAT
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PERHAPS MEDIATION WAS TOO STRONG A WORD, BUT PRES. SARKIS MIGHT WELL BE ABLE TO USE SUPPORT OF ARAB GOVERNMENTS TO CONVINCE FIGHTING FACTIONS TO DISENGAGE AND TO HELP ARRANGE TERMS OF DISENGAGEMENT. POSSIBLY THEY COULD FACILITATE MOVEMENT OF LEBANESE POLICE AND ARMY UNITS INTO KEY AREAS. KHADDAM SAID THAT SARKIS HAD INFORMED HIM OF DECISION TO BE IMPLEMENTED AUGUST 10 TO REPLACE TWO ADF UNITS IN SIOUFI AREA OF ASHRAFIYE WITH LEBANESE GENDARMERIE. IT WAS AN EXPERIMENT WHICH SYRIA WOULD GO ALONG WITH EVEN THOUGH CHANCES WERE GOOD THAT PHALANGE WOULD RAPIDLY DISARM AND EVICT GENDARMERIE. IN ANY EVENT, KHADDAM SAID, SYRIA WOULD KEEP PROPOSAL UNDER STUDY BUT PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD HAVE TO BE THE FIRST TO AGREE. I SAID AMBASSADOR PARKER WAS IN PROCESS OF RAISING MATTER WITH HIM.

17. COMMENT: THROUGHOUT THIS INITIAL CONVERSATION, I FOUND KHADDAM REFRESHINGLY DIRECT AND CORDIAL, NOT AS ACERBIC AND EMOTIONAL AS HE IS FREQUENTLY REPUTED TO BE. HE WAS VERY FRIENDLY AND SHOWED A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR. HE SPOKE WARMLY OF HIS GOOD RELATIONS WITH MY PREDECESSORS AND DEFENDED SYRIAN POSITIONS ELOQUENTLY, BUT WITHOUT EXTREMISM. HE SEEMED GENUINE IN HIS EXPRESSED DESIRE TO MAINTAIN CLOSE CONTACT WITH US AND TO AVOID MISUNDERSTANDINGS. I WAS FRANKLY SURPRISED THAT HE DID NOT TURN DOWN OUR PROPOSAL OUT OF HAND. IN FACT, I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT IF THE GOL SHOULD ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL, THE SYRIANS MIGHT NOT BE ADVERSE

TO TRYING IT OUT (PERHAPS AS A FACE-SAVER?) AS LONG
AS THEY COULD RETAIN THEIR AMOUR PROPRE IN THE PROCESS
AND THE "LEGITIMACY" OF THEIR ROLE IN LEBANON WAS NOT
IN QUESTION. HOWEVER, IT WAS CLEAR KHADDAM HELD OUT
LITTLE HOPE THAT SUCH AN EFFORT WOULD SUCCEED. WHILE I
THINK HE KNOWS THAT WE REALLY SHARE SYRIA'S AIM TO
RESTORE LEBANESE NATIONAL UNITY, HE IS PUZZLED
AND IRKED BY OUR INABILITY TO INDUCE THE ISRAELIS,
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WHO SEEM TO WANT PRESENT INSTABILITY MAINTAINED, TO KEEP
THEIR HANDS OFF.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, MEETING REPORTS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, PLANNING MEETINGS, STUDIES, PROPOSALS (BID), MEETINGS, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DAMASC04598
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: OA 19840810
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P850061-2060
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780879/aaaacoaa.tel
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Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, EXDIS
Page Count: 9
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, EXDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 200854
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1781712
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR TO STUDY US PROPOSAL ON LEBANON
TAGS: PBOR, MOPS, MILI, XF, SY, LE, IS, US, (KHADDAM, ABD AL-HALIM)
To: SS ABU DHABI MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/06d55b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014